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BOARD OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PAN-AFRICAN DIVISION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The division after 5 years

The Division has been established informally since 2002 and has reached stage of more formal establishment. Development has been a cumbersome and extended one partly due to communication difficulties. Due to stringent data protection and privacy policies direct contact/communication with the members has been complicated. The establishment of this newsletter is one attempt to overcome this difficulty for the region.

Given the vast size and nature of our continent, the small numbers of health professionals, in particular psychiatrists, the successful meetings each year at the Conference has become a popular and important feature. Significant sessions and topics have been presented at each venue since 2002. The gathering of African- based colleagues and expatriate colleagues as well as our many friends is a highlight for those who have attended the meetings.

The Division is a particularly small one with just over 50 members in good standing at last count. Evaluation of the situation indicates that there are potentially more members who have been lost or not maintained their membership or have moved from the region. It is essential to strengthen the contact with members and to recruit previous members back. The membership distribution consists of the following countries: Botswana, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya, Mauritius. It must be remembered that not all the other countries are English speaking with traditional relationships with the Royal College.

Discussions in the past year have centred round development and training projects and assistance to the region. The introduction of "affiliate membership" of the Division in the form of associates from other divisions would include that of psychiatrists from Africa now resident in the UK. This would strengthen and support the division as well as mental health services.

Plans for 2007 include a session at the Edinburgh meeting on "Innovation in the management of mental health: social-cultural and economic realities in Africa" as well as the AGM of the Division.

I look forward to and would welcome contact and suggestions relevant to our region. The Division looks forward to increase involvement of colleagues in the activities of the Division.

Prof. Tuviah Zabow
Nov. 2006

GOODWILL LETTER
from
Professor David Ndetei

I would like to congratulate the first edition of the African International Division, and our secretary, Dr Femi Olugbile for all the efforts to put it together.

- *Congratulations.*
- *Awareness increasing.*
- *Africa cannot be ignored by international community.*
- *Evidence-based policies required.*

There are many out there who are eligible to be members of this Division. I would like to encourage them to join this division and contribute through their ideas on how best the division can promote mental health in Africa, or simply contribute by letting us know they are with us.

There are many things that are happening in Africa as far as increased awareness that mental health issues in Africa cannot any longer be ignored by the international community.

One of the things that is happening is increased activity in Research. This is critical if Africa is to come up with evidence based policies and practices, even on issue of Manpower development, resource development and clinical services.

We cannot afford to copy blindly practices from elsewhere without evidence that they are appropriate, affordable, accessible and available.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL DIVISION ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am. on 11th July, 2006.

In attendance:

Prof Tuviah Zabow

Dr Gregory Lydall

Dr Femi Olugbile

Dr Charles Mambwe

Prof David Ndetei

Dr Justin Marley

Prof Hamid Ghodse

Dr Shereen Haffejee

Dr Idowu Malomo

Dr Martin Schmidt

Prof M Fakhr El-Islam

Dr Kate Gingell

Dr Gareth Nortje

Dr Linda Emslie

Dr Anne Aboaja

Dr Marjory Foyle

Dr Afzal Javed

Dr Olawale Lagundoye

Dr Anne Lindhardt

Dr Robert Higgs

Dr Thomas Russ

Dr Brian Martindale

Dr Helen Hayes

Dr Frank Njenga

Professor Zabow welcomed members to the meeting.

He announced the co-option of Prof David Ndetei into the Executive Committee of the African International Division.

Dr Frank Njenga made a presentation on the WPA Regional Meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Nairobi in March, 2006. He encouraged members to attend. He requested for proposals for symposia and papers at the conference. The Division would be hosting a symposium. The meeting was informed that there would be an official delegation from the Royal College of Psychiatrists at the Nairobi event.

There was discussion on the Overseas Volunteer Scheme of the College. The merits were highlighted, as well as the potential benefits to the host community. The difficulties experienced so far on the field in the process of implementing the scheme were highlighted.

Prof Ndetei spoke on the need for the Division to focus on generating a momentum for research work in Africa. Prof Zabow informed the meeting about the decision of the Committee to publish a newsletter, and to generally seek to improve the communication between psychiatrists in Africa.

The meeting came to an end at 11.15 am.

WORLD PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION (WPA) REGIONAL CONGRESS

The WPA Regional Conference will be taking place in Nairobi, Kenya, 21st - 23rd March 2007. Plans are afoot to make it a truly memorable event. Tagged '*International Psychiatrists on African Safari*', the conference has as its main theme '**Mental Health In Development**', with such sub-themes as Provision of mental health in low-resourced countries, Mental Health within General Health Services, Mental Health Economics and Policies, HIV, The Brain and Development, Mental Health Workforce, and Psychopathology, Disability and Well-being.

A large turn-out of psychiatrists is expected from Africa and other continents. The Congress President is Juan Mezzich. The Convener is Dr Frank Njenga. Dr Marx Okonji heads the Local Organising Committee. The scientific committee is headed by Prof Oye Gureje. Over 500 participants and exhibitors are expected.

There will be a high-powered delegation from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, led by the President of the College, Professor Sheila Hollins. The African International Division will hold a scientific conference, with Professors Hollins, Ghodse and Bailey as invited speakers. There will also be a cocktail reception for all members of the Royal College.

Further information about the congress is available at <http://www.wpa2007nairobi.com>

NIGERIAN PSYCHIATRISTS MEET

The Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria held its 37th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference from 23rd - 25th November 2006. The meeting was held in collaboration with the World Psychiatric Association. The venue was the conference hall of the University of Ibadan.

There was an impressive turn-out of Psychiatrists and other mental health professionals from within and outside Africa.

The main theme of the conference was '**Mental Health Across The Lifespan**'. Apart from papers presented on a wide variety of issues of concern in the continent, four keynote lectures were delivered by eminent psychiatrists.

Professor Joseph Zohar (Director, Division of Psychiatry, Chaim Sheba Medical Centre, Ramat Gan., Israel, and Chairman, Anxiety and OCD Section of WPA) spoke on 'Update on Anxiety Disorders- the contribution of biology to diagnosis and treatment'. Professor David Ndeti spoke on 'Human mental health resources in Africa at crossroads - which way now?'

Dr Dorothy Klecha delivered a paper on 'Electroconvulsive Therapy for Depressive Disorders - State of the Art'. Professor Rachel Jenkins, Director WHO Collaborating Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, and Secretary to the Board of International Affairs addressed the topic 'Mental Health in Africa - some practical concerns and challenges'.

The President of the Association, Prof Oye Gureje, expressed delight at the large turn-out. A Biological Psychiatry Interest Group was inaugurated during the conference.

Contributions & comments to femi_olugbile@yahoo.com